

FLIGHT

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The Other Aviation

FRENCH aviation circles have become accustomed to speak of the new light plane movement, including the *Pou-du-Ciel* amateur-built and flown, as *l'autre aviation*. That is rather a misnomer; it is intended to describe a radical departure, whereas actually it includes merely a certain branch of aviation in general. The term might be applied with much more justification to Autogiro flying of the sort which to-day's demonstration among the gorse-bushes of Hounslow Heath inaugurates. Jump-starting has virtually introduced a new form of flying altogether, and one which may affect profoundly the future history of private flying. The fact that a start from quite a small field is now proved to be perfectly feasible alters the whole picture. *Flight* does not believe that the Autogiro will ever supplant the aeroplane; it does not regard the two types of aircraft as rivals, but rather as complementary to one another. Each can do something, or has something to offer, which the other lacks.

If one stops to think for a moment, it becomes obvious that the jump-start Autogiro represents the greatest contribution towards popularising private flying, used in the sense made familiar by the car owner, of any aircraft so far produced; and it does it, not by virtue of cheapness, absence of stalling danger, or any of its flying characteristics, but indirectly by making possible decentralisation. So long as an aircraft of any kind requires specially prepared aerodromes, there must be congestion at those aerodromes. If some William Morris of the air came along and produced the £100 aeroplane, what would be the result? The air in the vicinity of aerodromes would be full of aircraft and the danger of collisions, particularly in poor visibility, would be sufficient to provide a serious check. With the jump-start Autogiro, on the other hand, almost any field in the country becomes a potential "girodrome," if the term be permitted, and a given number of machines in

the air at any given moment will be "spread out thinly" instead of being concentrated.

The picture can readily be developed. If we ever have as many Autogiros as we now have cars, they will not be confined to narrow, crowded air lanes, but will be scattered about. That in itself might constitute a danger in thick weather, but for one of the Autogiro's flying characteristics—that it is possible to slow down to some 15-20 miles per hour without fear of stalling. At that speed the risk of collision is far smaller, and the pilot has much more time to decide what to do, than in aeroplanes approaching each other at anything from 50 m.p.h. upwards. A forced landing could be brought off successfully in almost any field, and even at the worst the pilot would probably escape with a shaking even if the machine were badly damaged.

Military Uses

It is a somewhat curious fact that for military work the Autogiro is of very little interest to the R.A.F., but is likely to have very important uses with the Army and Navy. Had it been otherwise, it seems likely that this type of aircraft would have made more rapid progress, as in that case Government assistance in a more generous measure (one does not forget that Mr. Wimperis, Director of Scientific Research, did help Mr. de la Cierva a great deal in the early days) would probably have been forthcoming.

As it is, Air Commodore J. G. Weir deserves the very greatest praise for his share in the development of the Autogiro. But for his faith in the ultimate success of the type, a faith backed by good hard cash, we might still be at the stage of starting the rotor by deflecting the airscrew slipstream. He and those associated with him made it possible for Mr. de la Cierva and other technicians to develop, improve and perfect the technical features until a point has been reached when it can be said that the type is a practical flying machine just embarking upon a period of natural growth.